

## Contributions

### THE CHURCH

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The church of Christ. What is it? I fear that many adherents of the church of Christ do not have the true conception of what it really is. All agree that the church was divinely instituted, but many fail to grasp that she must be divinely indwelt and governed; not only the church as a whole, but every member of the body must have the divine nature imparted; it is this that constitutes the church, anything short of this is not a church in the true sense of the term.

Scholars tell us that the Greek term for church is *Ecclesia* signifying "called out." Jesus evidently understood the term when he used it to express the idea of the prospective new compact or organization which He purposed to institute.

There never was a church in the world before the day of Pentecost. The word church does not once appear in the Old Testament and only twice in the Gospels and then only used by the Savior: once to express her character in Matt. 16: 16, 18; and once to express in part her functions in Matt. 18: 17. In the Acts and Epistles it is used fully one hundred times. The entire absence of the word before Pentecost, and its repeated and re-repeated use after that day is conclusive evidence that the idea which the term conveys was not known before that time. Words are used to express ideas. Unless we understand the idea, we cannot understand the word. For instance, take the word *house*, it would not convey an idea to the mind if we had never seen or heard of a house, just so with the word *church*. The apostles could not conceive of an institution in the world and yet not of the world until it was demonstrated to them by the descent of the Holy Ghost; not until its quickening power was felt in their own beings. And it is doubtful whether any one today can comprehend the true meaning of the term unless he has received the same indwelling spirit.

The first intimation of what the church was to be is given in Matt. 16: 13, 18. Jesus asked, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; some Elias; others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

He saith unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?"

And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in

heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build my *church* and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The truth which Peter confessed when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" is the rock upon which the church is founded. The divinity of Christ is the foundation of the church of Christ, and every stone that goes into the superstructure must be divinely dressed, every brick divinely moulded, every bit of mortar divinely tempered, every beam and rafter divinely fitted together, and a roof of divine love over the whole of it. This is what the term *church* implies, a people "called out" from a natural into a spiritual life, "called out" from an earthly into a heavenly relationship. This fact is proven by many direct, pointed passages of scripture, among them such as Phil. 3: 20, when Paul says "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." R. V. In Eph. 2: 4, 6, he says, "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love hath quickened us together with Christ, and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Possibly the most significant figure given to portray our oneness in Christ is that in Col. 1: 18, and in Eph. 1: 22, 23, where Christ is represented as being the head of the body, the church. If He is the head of the church as a whole He is also necessarily the head of every member of the body. We all understand the close relationship between our heads and our bodies; the head directs and every active, healthy member of the body obeys; their life is inseparable; just so Christ is in a most real sense our living head, if this is not the case we are not a part of his body, the church.

The necessity of the oneness of all the members of the church is set forth by the Savior in St. John 17: 20, 21. He says, "Neither pray I for these alone (meaning apostles) but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."

That they all may be one as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

The several scriptures quoted, in fact, the whole trend of the New Testament proves that the church of Christ is a divine institution, made up of divinely energized members.

Peter summarises the whole truth in his second epistle 1st chapter. He says "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us

exceedingly great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

### THE AGENCY

The agency through which the church is to be energized is the Holy Spirit. This truth was foreseen by the prophets and very definitely expressed by Joel in Joel 2: 28, 29. John the Baptist foretold the same truth when he said, "I indeed baptize you with waters unto repentance but He that cometh after me \* \* \* shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and fire."

Jesus himself declared the same truth time and again. On the day of Pentecost these promises were realized by the disciples in a definite way.

Peter in his sermon on that day declared that the same blessing, the same outpouring of the Spirit should come to his immediate hearers, and to their children, and to all that are afar off even as many as the Lord God should call.

The promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is unlimited, not circumscribed to any nation or class; because of this universal, unlimited promise many take for granted that the Holy Spirit is in the nominal church, and that if they simply belong to the same denomination, the same branch of the so-called Christian church they have received the Holy Spirit or the impartation of the divine life, without any consciousness of it in their own experience. This is probably the most serious delusion of this age. Such as received the gift of the Holy Ghost in the primitive church were sensibly conscious of it, so that they gave outward evidence of the new life and power. Jesus in Luke 11: 13 says it is only for such as ask for it, as a child would ask a parent for bread when hungry. There must be a felt need and a definite acceptance of the Holy Spirit if we want to be members of the church of Christ in the sense that the term *church* is used in Matt. 16: 18.

Some may be averse to accepting the assertion that there never was a church in the world before the day of Pentecost, thinking that the Jews, who were the people of God were also a church. The Jews were a nation, not a church. Their life was purely an earthly life. They scarcely had a conception of any thing higher or different; when Jesus came and tried to tell them of a spiritual life, they staggered at it and rejected it, and finally crucified Him for attempting to change the old order of things. The thought of living in the world and yet not of the world was incomprehensible to them, even His own immediate disciples failed to grasp the idea up to the day of his death, not until after the resurrection could they at all perceive the possibility of a divine life in the flesh.